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**Date:** 4/22/2010 2:29 PM  
**Subject:** Iraq Trip Report  
**Attachments:** War Records Group, Baghdad, Iraq visit, trip report, April 15, 2010 draft v2.docx; Iraq Visit Schedule.pdf; JS Outbrief 4-9-10.pdf

Michael, attached is our report of our trip to Iraq. The report describes a number of deficiencies in the management of records in the CENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR), the most serious ones being lost records, especially in the early years of the war; the lack of records management SOPs, especially concerning transferring records to CONUS as the war winds down; and unclear division of responsibility between CENTCOM and the Services, which has probably led to weak records management in the CENTCOM AOR.

The immediate actions we're taking is:

travel to CENTCOM on April 28 to review the transfer of records to date from the AOR to CENTCOM's HQ in Tampa, FL; find out status of Franks, Abizaid, and Patraeus collections; talk with SOCOM (Special Ops Command); and brief the CENTCOM records officers on their RM responsibilities.

John will be working on the CMH case study because the records collected by the historians may be the only copies of brigade and battalion level records.

John will also work on bringing in the 15-6 investigations and [REDACTED] so that we have these quick "wins" that should lead to more records coming in.

We need to work closely with Joint Staff on these issues, so a high level advocacy briefing with Joint Staff should take place soon.

Also included as attachments are the visit schedule and the outbrief prepared by the assessment team for Rear Admiral Simpson, who is the USF-I J6 (which has the responsibility for records management).

Mike

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## TRIP REPORT

Date: April 22, 2010

From: Michael Carlson, NWME; John Powell, NWME

To: NW  
NWM  
NARA War Records Working Group

Subj: Trip Report, USF-I Records Management Assessment, April 3 – 10, 2010

This memo reports on the trip taken by Michael Carlson (NWME) and John Powell (NWME) to U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), United States Forces – Iraq (USF-I), Baghdad, Iraq, April 3 to April 10, 2010. The Joint Staff invited NARA to participate in the assessment of USF-I records management as observers and subject matter experts. ]

original of Joint Staff

USF-I is the USCENTCOM sub-unified command responsible for the Iraq war theater. It succeeds and consolidates the previous major coalition forces commands: Multi-National Force - Iraq, Multi-National Corps - Iraq and Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq. USF-I is composed of generally three divisions: United States Division – North, headquartered by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, United States Division – Central, headquartered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division, and United States Division – South, headquartered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. USF-I is a joint task force composed primarily of U.S. Army members from the deployed III Corps staff and individual staff augmented from the other military services. By September 1, 2010, USF-I will reduce its troop force levels to about 50,000 from its present 100,000. By December 31, 2011, U.S. forces are scheduled to be completely withdrawn from Iraq. Left behind will be political and military components staffed with a few thousand personnel and formed into an Office of Security Cooperation and charged with assisting the Iraqi Government in various economic and security matters.

The NARA team members supported the Records, Research and Content Branch of the Joint Staff in their assessment of the state of records management at the USF-I headquarters at Camp Victory, Iraq. Camp Victory houses the headquarters of USF-I and serves as the primary camp within a large US military complex surrounding the Baghdad International Airport. The Joint Staff's stated purpose for the trip was to ensure that all historically important information generated by USF-I in the conduct of Operation Iraqi Freedom is identified, safeguarded and properly managed; to plan for the movement of records back to the United States as troop levels draw down; and to create a template for management of records of future in-theater conflicts, with a particular emphasis on planning for the eventual draw down of US forces in Afghanistan.

NARA's focus during the assessment was on the state of records management within USF-I; the disposition of permanent records in general from the start of the war in 2003

to the present; the disposition of specific series of records, such as AR 15-6 casualty investigations and pre-detainee investigative records; and the management of electronic records. NARA also wanted to investigate how CENTCOM and the Army utilized historians and related military history detachments within the area of responsibility and to obtain a better understanding of how records management responsibilities were distributed between CENTCOM and the Service Branches.

**Besides Michael Carlson and John Powell of NARA, the Assessment team personnel participating included:**

Mr. James Willson-Quayle, Joint Staff Records Officer  
 Mr. Scott McPherson, Joint Staff Content Manager  
 SGM Debra Wilcox, Joint Staff Information Specialist  
 Mr. Charley Barth, Director of Records, U.S. Navy  
 Mr. Richard Wojewoda, Chief, Army Records Management  
 Mr. John Hall, Chief, Army Records Branch  
 Lt. Col. Donald Walker, USCENTCOM Records Officer

Supporting the team in Iraq:



**Schedule of Activities:**

April 3-4: Travel from Washington, D.C., to Sather AFB (Baghdad International Airport) with stopover in Kuwait

April 5-9: USF-I Headquarters, Camp Victory

The attached schedule outlines the team's activities. The team was able to visit and interview the major producers of permanent records within USF-I: Records Management (J6) and the Meridio system; Knowledge Management; Strategy, Plans, and Assessments (J5); Gulf Region District, Transatlantic Division, Army Corps of Engineers; Deputy Command General for Advisory and Training (in support of Iraqi forces); Strategic Effects (J9); 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division (III Corps) and USF-I historians; Intelligence (J2). NARA also met separately with the following units: 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division historian regarding collection activities of military history detachments; and the Staff Judge Advocate regarding the status of AR 15-6 investigative cases.

April 9-10: Travel from Sather AFB to Washington, D.C. with a stopover in Kuwait. In Kuwait the team met with Mr. Matt Staden, Navy Records Officer. He had traveled separately to NAVCENT in Bahrain while the assessment team was in Baghdad.

**Findings:**



*Centcom Iraq*

The USF-I records management shows serious deficiencies in the area of records management.

1. Volume, location, size and formats of USF-I records holdings are unknown and there are large gaps in the records holdings of CENTCOM and Service components.

This finding represents the most serious problem facing CENTCOM in its Iraq area of responsibility (AOR). With the exception of the Army Corps of Engineers, none of the offices visited have responsibly managed their records. Most units lack file plans and only reasonably manage records for current business purposes. From the start of the war, as personnel rotate in and out of positions and jobs, the management of records has largely depended upon the conscientiousness of individuals and the extent to which records were captured on multiple shared network drives and the Microsoft Sharepoint portal used for collaborative work products. Staff reported knowledge of only the recently created and filed records and knew little of the records created prior to their deployments, including email. With the exception of CIDNE (Combined Information Data Network Exchange) which is a report database of significant activities within Iraq and Afghanistan, staff reported the use or knowledge of no other database systems.

Despite DoD mandating the preservation of "historical records pertaining to Iraq" soon after the war started in 2003, no specific records management guidance was issued until 2008. At that time CENTCOM made records management a requirement in theater and established a records management unit within the J6 directorate. Also in 2008, CENTCOM selected the electronic records management application, Meridio, and installed it in April 2009. Since that time, an under-resourced USF-I staff of one records officer and two contractors have been migrating records from shared drives and the Sharepoint portal to the Meridio ERMA. Progress has been extremely slow. At this time, only about 4 terabytes of electronic records out of an estimated 30 to 50 terabytes existing in the CENTCOM AOR have been captured in their Meridio ERMA. The 4-terabytes only extend from 2006. It is unclear the extent to which records exist prior to 2006.

2. *CENTCOM lacks a fully implemented records management program and plans for moving records back to CONUS as the war winds down.*

Records management in ISF-I is under-resourced and has low visibility. Offices manage records on their own and have not planned for properly disposing or moving records back to the United States as staff and troops re-deploy to other geographic areas. Records management guidance has not been fully implemented or disseminated and the various "J" directorates and staff offices lack standard operating procedures regarding records management.

The one bright spot in an otherwise dismal records management environment is the work of historians at the command and division levels. Military History Detachments (MHD) have worked hard at capturing as many records as possible from military units working within the AOR. The 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division MHD commander deploys his three-man

teams to the field for the purpose of collecting copies of records in the field and oral histories. The stated purpose of the collection effort is to write histories of the contingency operations. Therefore, the activities are conducted outside of the records management program and records gathered from the units are sent to the Center for Military History. Because of the lack of a sound records management program, the records gathered by the historians may be the only surviving records at the brigade and battalion levels. Similarly the USF-I historian coordinates with the division historians and the MHDs. He collects copies of key documents, takes notes during high level meetings, records interviews of key personnel, and writes a quarterly history. Again because of the lack of sound records management program among the staff offices of USF-I and predecessor commands, the USF-I historian may manage the only copies of certain records.

3. *Lines of demarcation between the records management responsibilities of CENTCOM and the Services, i.e., Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and affiliated combatant commands, such as, Special Operations (SOCOM), are unclear.*

Many records are inadequately managed and at worst lost because the military components do not agree on who has responsibility for certain records and there are no clear guidelines regarding ownership of records. Broadly defined, the combatant commands, such as CENTCOM, have responsibility for conducting combat operations and generally managing the military's activities in its area of responsibility. The Services assign personnel and units to the combatant commands, under subordinate unified commands, such as Army Central Command (ARCENT), Air Force Central Command (AFCENT), and so forth.

An example of blurry lines of responsibility is Army Regulation 15-6 Investigative Case Files. "15-6 Investigations," which document investigations into incidents such as fatal casualties, accidents, and similar, are believed to be owned by Army or CENTCOM depending upon the source. Transfer to NARA of the inactive portion of the investigative files is being held up because of the difference of opinion as to which organization is responsible for the records.

#### **Assessment Team Action Plan:**

The Assessment Team recommended an aggressive strategy and series of short, medium, and long-term action items meant to address the serious records management problems at USF-I. In an out brief before Rear Admiral David G. Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Communications and Information Systems, United States Forces-Iraq, on April 9, the team outlined a number of immediate action items. See Attachment 2 for details of the recommendations.

Short Term Actions (April 10 through May 30, 2010): Focus on better resourcing the records management function, e.g., establishing leads and deploy a Staff Assistance Visit (SAV) in May; inventory repositories of records and find the gaps; promulgate immediate and aggressive records management guidance; stop the loss of email by having all email

at O7 (Colonel) and above retained; plan for migrating the records into TRIM, which is CENTCOM's RMA at a headquarter level.

Medium to Long-Term Recommendations (June 1 through September 1, 2010): Resolve areas of records management responsibility between CENTCOM and the services; establish training programs (along the lines of Air Force); control information systems; ensure that the Office of Security Cooperation, which will succeed USF-I after withdrawal of USF-I forces at the end of 2011, has a sound records management program in place.

#### **Recommended NARA Action Plan:**

The NARA participants recommend a number of actions that NARA can take to carry out its own mission of ensuring that agencies create records that adequately document their business needs; adequately document rights and responsibilities; and preserve records that document the national experience; and support the goals of the Joint Staff.

*Continue already scheduled visits and briefing and schedule additional ones.* The focus of the visits, besides the goals stated below, should be to obtain more information about the disposition of records coming from the CENTCOM AOR and identify database systems. Visits scheduled:

- ARCENT, Ft. McPherson, Atlanta, GA. Tentatively scheduled for June with the participation of the Southeast Region. The goals of the visit will be to assess the management of records within the Army Central Command.
- CENTCOM Headquarters, McDill AFB, Tampa, FL. Scheduled for April 28. The CENTCOM Records Officer invited Michael Carlson to participate in a meeting of the CENTCOM Headquarters records officers. The agenda includes: briefing the records managers on NARA's records management and archival interests in the war records; review of the transfer protocols from Sharepoint (Iraq AOR) to TRIM (CENTCOM HQ); review of Generals Franks and Abizaid records collections efforts; and meet with the Special Operations Command records officers.

*Follow-up the assessment with a high level visit to the Joint Staff. NARA needs to be involved with the Joint Staff as they work through the records management problems at CENTCOM.*

- Conduct a high level advocacy meeting with the Joint Staff. The Joint Staff has oversight of records management within the combatant commands. As a result of the Iraq assessment visit, the Joint Staff is aggressively addressing existing records management deficiencies and making the changes necessary to manage records during contingency operations, e.g., conflicts and wars. A high level advocacy meeting should seek to ensure that Joint Staff continues supporting the efforts of its staff, offer any assistance in their efforts from NARA, and ensure that Joint Staff's own permanent records are scheduled for transfer to NARA.



*Follow-up the assessment with visits to Army Corps Headquarters*

- Army Corps Headquarters, either through visits or other communication means. Investigate the disposition of records at the corps, brigade, and battalion levels in the Iraq AOR
  - I Corps, Ft. Lewis, WA
  - III Corps, Ft. Hood, TX (currently the bulk of the USF-I headquarters staff)
  - V Corps, Germany
  - XVIII Airborne, Ft. Bragg, NC

*Obtain further information about gaps in the records of military components and the use of databases in the AOR. The focus of visits*

*Pursue the AR 15-6 Investigative Files project.* As described above, the permanent Army Regulation 15-6 Investigative Case files include those pertaining to both hostile and non-hostile deaths in the Iraq theater. Many are inactive and closed. They are in both paper and electronic form. As soon as jurisdiction over the records is determined, they should be immediately accessioned or pre-accessioned into NARA.

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*Complete the Military History Detachment Case Study.* Prior to going to Iraq, NARA received a sample of records gathered from Military History Detachment in the Iraq AOR and sent to the Center for Military History. The purpose of the case study is to find out what records are being collected in the Iraq AOR and whether or not they should be accessioned or pre-accessioned into NARA. Because the assessment trip uncovered

serious problems in the management of records by USF-1, the urgency to complete the case study and arrange for the proper disposition of records has increased. The immediate tasks are as follows:

- E-mail MHD leader in 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division in Iraq about visit
- E-mail Center for Military History CMH) POCs about our visit with MHD in Iraq
- Complete the MHD Case Study

Michael Carlson  
Director  
Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division

Attachments (2)